

FORT FISHER  
STATE HISTORIC SITE

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF IN-  
TEREST:

- Commemorate Fort Fisher's 144th Anniversary on Saturday, January 17, 2009!
- See Fort Fisher's cannon crew at Fort Anderson State Historic Site's annual program, February 14-15, 2009.

INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

From the Site Manager's Desk	2
Upcoming Additions to the Gift shop	2
John A. Richardson: Reluctant Lieut. Colonel	3
Cannoneer's Corner	5
New Exhibit Opening in 2009	5
Fort Fisher Attends Small Arms	6
Fort Fisher Staff Around the State	7
2009 Spring and Summer Programs	8

# The Powder Magazine

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2008

## Cannons Boom for Anniversary Program

Hear the cannons boom at Fort Fisher's anniversary program 10:00am to 4:00pm, Saturday, January 17, 2009.

Highlighting this annual event are several Civil War photography themed programs. Watch Bob Zeller's stellar 3-D Civil War photography show, learn about the creation of period images during wet-plate photography demonstrations, and be one of the first to see Fort Fisher's new temporary exhibit on Timothy O'Sullivan who photographed the fort in January 1865!

Volunteers and site staff in period costume will perform artillery and infantry demon-

strations throughout the day, including our famed 32 pound rifled and banded cannon, pictured below.

Stroll the grounds of the fort as you enjoy period music from the Huckleberry Brothers and local guitarist, John Golden. Civilian reenactors will be on hand to demonstrate a multitude of crafts and activities and site staff will teach kids of all ages how to make their own dummy cartridges, with one to take

home as a souvenir.

This program is funded in part by the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee. All demonstrations are subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. Please contact the site for details.

By Amy Manor Thornton

**Fort Fisher's 32 pound rifled and banded cannon fired at last January's program.**



## Bob Zeller Brings 3-D Show to Fort Fisher

For the first time ever Bob Zeller, president of the Center for Civil War Photography, will be presenting his 3-D show of Civil War images including several of Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs of Fort Fisher.

Wearing 3-D glasses, visitors at the Fort Fisher anniversary program Saturday, January 17, 2009, can travel into the past as they experience Civil War photography as it was meant

to be seen. Many images of the war were taken with stereoscopic cameras and meant to be viewed by the public in 3-D through stereo viewers.

Bob Zeller, author of numerous books on the subject, includes many famous images of the Civil War along side rare, recently discovered photos and for the first time he is including O'Sullivan's photographs of Fort Fisher

taken in January 1865, shortly after its capture by Union troops.

Two shows will be offered at 1pm and 3pm on Saturday, January 17. Tickets are required and will go on sale the week before the program. Please call of the site for details: (910) 458-5538 or email: [fisher@ncmail.net](mailto:fisher@ncmail.net).

By Amy Manor Thornton

## From the Site Manager's Desk

Greetings and welcome to the first issue of Fort Fisher State Historic Site's newsletter, *The Powder Magazine*. In these pages we will update you on site news, activities, and programs, publish articles of historical interest, and bring you other items worthy of attention. *The Powder Magazine* is a work in progress, and will evolve to suit the tastes of its audience, so please drop us a line and let us know what you think.

Two thousand and eight has been a terrific year for Fort Fisher. Over 500,000 visitors enjoyed dynamic interpretive programming, improved visitor services and increased security measures. The 143<sup>rd</sup> anniversary program was a

great success as were several smaller programs held this year, even when ugly weather interfered. I believe there is something to the old-time, rainmakers' practice of firing cannons; it seems we cannot fire any of ours without start-

***"I believe there is something to the old-time, rainmakers' practice of firing cannons; it seems we cannot fire any of ours without starting a***

***thunderstorm!"***

ing a thunderstorm!

In closing, I wish to thank every individual and organiza-

tion that has helped us make 2008 such a successful year for Fort Fisher. We do not stand alone; we have enjoyed your solid support, and we are truly grateful. Our success is your success too! Cultivating friendly relationships with everyone we meet, creating goodwill and mutual advantages, large and small—add some hard work and success inevitably follows! Thank you for your continuing support. With your help, 2009 will be another great year for the Gibraltar of the South.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you all,

Jim

***"This is a must for those who are historical interpreters, historical re-enactors, scouts and campers or interested in historical food ways."***

## Upcoming Additions to the Giftshop

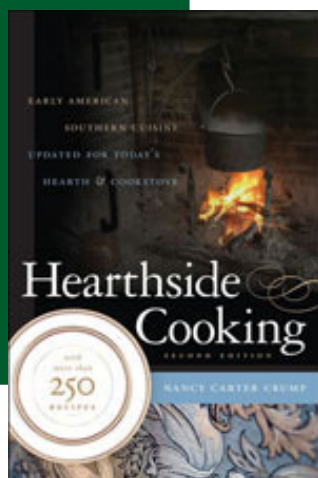
For those who have not visited the gift shop in a while, there have been some major changes to the appearance and variety of items available as well. The gift shop offers a variety of historical books, apparel, toys, and Fort Fisher merchandise. We take great pride in adding new books on various subjects each year and I am pleased to announce the arrival of *Hearthside Cooking* by Nancy Carter Crump by UNC Press, at the beginning of 2009. *Hearthside Cooking* is 352 pages, hard-bound and will

retail at \$30+ tax.

This is an outstanding book for anyone who is interested in early American southern cuisine and hearthside cooking. This most recent revision replaces the previous edition first published in 1986; Ms. Crump delves into original Colonial cookbooks, handwritten receipts from various archives, African-American cooking and how the Civil War affected southern cooking traditions. *Hearthside Cooking* contains more than 250 recipes and historical dishes. This is a must for those who are historical interpreters, historical re-enactors, scouts and campers, or interested in historical food ways.

What I am most impressed with is the variety of recipes; anything from breads to desserts to historical drinks; and the recipe is broken down into two parts, the historical version and the "modern" equivalent, if you wish to try a recipe at home. For those who wish to try to cook over the open hearth, Crump provides illustrations on the variety of tools, equipment, a list of sources for historical food supplies, and an index to the recipes listed in the book. Again, a must read for anyone interested in this early American culinary delight!

By Becky Sawyer



# John A. Richardson: Reluctant Lieutenant Colonel

Shortly after coming on board at Fort Fisher State Historic Site in 1997, I came across a curious passage in an article by Colonel William Lamb of the 36<sup>th</sup> North Carolina. Simply entitled "Fort Fisher", Lamb inadvertently posed a riddle within the story that has since proven a "Gordian Knot" to unravel. In relating a pregnant anecdote he wrote, "I had been sent to Fort Fisher to discipline the garrison against the temptations incident to blockade-running. My first act on taking command, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1862 was to suspend an officer for being intoxicated and I had him cashiered."...Now, who was this intemperate officer? With no other account of this episode known to exist, positively identifying the offender is thus far impossible. However, after following a long circuitous trail of circumstantial evidence, I have since arrived at the conclusion that the officer in question *might* well have been none other than Lamb's own reluctant Lieutenant Colonel, John A. Richardson.

The genesis of this investigation began where most research for Confederates posted along the Lower Cape Fear begins, with a perusal of Fort Fisher's secular bible: Manarin's North Carolina Troop Roster 1861-1865, Vol. I Artillery. Under Richardson's name his titillating entry as Lieutenant Colonel reads, "Transferred from 2<sup>nd</sup> Company I of this regiment upon election as Lieutenant Colonel May 14, 1862. Dismissed by General Court Martial November 17, 1863. Dropped from rolls January 23, 1864." Unfortunately, though Richardson's inexplicable court martial might be unique, it does not appear immediately conclusive. After all, Lamb took command of Fort Fisher in July of '62 and Richardson was not court martialled till November of '63, almost a year and a half later. Further convoluting the issue is Lamb's his-

tory of the 36<sup>th</sup> found in Clark's North Carolina Regiments 1861-65. Assuming the third person he wrote, "Colonel Lamb remained at Fort St. Philip, Old Brunswick until 4 July 1862 when he relieved Major John J. Hedrick in command of Fort Fisher and defenses of Confederate Point, including Zeek's Island." This pronouncement beggars the question, if a Lt Col (Richardson) was present, why would a Major (Hedrick) be in command? At this point Richardson all but vanished for another five years. In fact, under closer scrutiny the reluctant Lt Col is barely visible throughout his tenure. In September of '62, as commandant of Fort St. Philip, he wrote a letter of complaint to the governor concerning regimental organization. Then there's Lamb's succinct explanation for John D. Taylor's promotion and his (Taylor) superseding Richardson as Lt Col, "January 23, 1864 Major Taylor was promoted to Lt Col in place of Richardson dropped." Little else appears, he's not even mentioned in the



**Col. John A. Richardson**  
b. 1826 – d. 1872

Official Records. In post war years Lamb wrote several histories extolling the exploits of his comrades and acquaintances associated with his old command, but nary a word more about Richardson. The silence is deafening.

***"My first act on taking command,***

***July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1862 was to suspend an***

***officer for being intoxicated and I***

***had him cashiered.'...Now, who was***

***this intemperate officer?"***

Evidently there was a rift between the Colonel and his Lt, but what was the bone of contention? Like Lamb, Richardson was an attorney, though nine years older, and unlike Lamb he was a North Carolinian, as were most of the troops and company commanders of the regiment. However, when Lamb first arrived in Wilmington in October 1861 on the staff of fellow Virginian General Joseph Reid Anderson, with the rank of Major, he already ranked Captain Richardson. In May of 1862, just prior to the regimental elections, Lamb's adjutant, Lt Thomas Rowland, who was born in Michigan though raised in Virginia, wrote his mother that his good friend Captain George Parker was to be Lamb's Lt Colonel. Rowland was a talented engineer, a West Pointe, and eventually promoted and rotated to a different theatre of war. Obviously Lamb thought something of the young man, Fort Fisher's Battery Rowland was almost certainly named in his honor and as late as November 1864 his old colonel remembered him with a gift of wine and oranges. But where did Rowland get the impression that Parker was to be promoted to the Lt Colonelcy? Parker was not a Virginian either, though he was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute and had rela-

**Continued on page 4...**



## Continued from page 3: John A. Richardson

tions in Lamb's home town of Norfolk. And while Parker would never be the Lt Colonel, he did ultimately assume Rowland's vacated position as adjutant. Could it be that Richardson was a victim of the Old Dominion clique?

For the longest time it seemed that history had successfully ostracized Richardson. Then about a year and a half ago, several new pieces of the puzzle appeared to flesh out the reluctant Lt Colonel considerably. First of all, a grad student working at the site acquired a compilation of Richardson's Registers, Returns and Rolls from National Archives. Two of the documents are compelling: a Field and Staff Muster Roll for July and August 1862, dated August 31, reads, "Transferred to Fort Fisher per Special Order No. 345 from District Hd. Qr. Date July 3<sup>rd</sup>". The other, a Return dated July 1862 reads, "Transferred to Fort St Philip July 6, 1862 by order of Brig. Gen'l French". Clearly these papers place Richardson at Fort Fisher on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1862, and almost as important, show him leaving soon after. And while the Return does not indict him for drunkenness, the information did make me a bit giddy.

Sometime later a recent visitor to the site sent me a copy of Richardson's Service Record from National Archives. It states in part, "Attempted to resign, letter in record, on 1-20-63 because he had not received his appointment and the Col and Major had received theirs." There is an endorsement, apparently by [General Robert E. Lee], that he knew of no reason why the appointment should be denied. [District Commander, Brigadier General] Whiting made the appointment on 2-18-63. On 8-18-64, Richardson wrote to the AIGO (Adjutant and

Inspector General's Office), letter in record, requesting a copy of his CM (Court Martial) transcript in order that he might defend himself. Unfortunately, there is no information as to the General Order, number, department and the like, that published the court's findings." Once more, the records are devoid of detail or explanation, yet one can't help but feel that somebody (or bodies) within the 36<sup>th</sup> just did not like Richardson.

***"Could it be that Richardson was a victim of the Old Dominion clique?"***

This sentiment was confirmed shortly thereafter when a site employee produced another letter from Richardson to the governor, two newspaper clippings, and yes, a photograph. In the letter dated November 26, 1863, one week after his court martial, Richardson requests permission to resign his position as well as an exemption from conscription. His excuse for the exemption being that he could not support his family on a private's pay of eleven dollars a month, nor could he afford to hire a substitute. Equally empathetic is his reason for resigning being given as, "...the relation existing between myself and certain of the officers of the Regt to which I belong is unpleasant, as much so, indeed, as to render it exceedingly disagreeable to me to remain longer with the Regt." In closing, Richardson assures the governor that should his "Excellency" act favorably upon his request, "I promise to enter the ranks whenever the enemy attempts to attack us in the vicinity of Wilmington."

Obviously unimpressed, Governor Zebulon Vance scribbled his laconic response on the back of the letter, "The Gov has no power to excuse him from conscription ZV".

Less than three months later, Richardson submitted an advertisement to the "Wilmington Journal" that appeared on February 8, 1864. Apparently, he had been accused of skimming money from the soldiers' enlistment bounties. In retaliation, he denied the charges vehemently and offered a one thousand dollar reward to any man who would swear differently in a court of law. "This offer will stand good so long as I live....," he pledged. Now, was this accusation linked to his court martial, or just part of the flotsam and jetsam of malicious gossip that followed in its wake? Moreover, are the alcohol related incident of '62 and the court martial of '63 unrelated issues? Once more the Lt Colonel is reluctant to say.

The last we hear of the former Lt Col during the war appears in the "Wilmington Journal" on January 16, 1865. He was in Wilmington to relinquish five escaped Yankee prisoners that had been recaptured near Elizabeth Town. Ironically, Fort Fisher had fallen the day before and Colonel Lamb and most of the 36<sup>th</sup> were now prisoners of war. Could Richardson's auspicious appearance in Wilmington be attributed to his promise to the governor that he would, "...Enter the ranks whenever the enemy attempts to attack in the vicinity ..."? If so, he'd arrived just a little too late. Perhaps for once, Richardson's reluctance had finally paid off.

By Ray Flowers



## Cannoneer's Corner

There's nothing like firing our bronze 12 pound Napoleon and hearing the crowd cheer afterwards. The Fort Fisher cannon crew takes great pride in performing living history artillery demonstrations both here at our site and at other North Carolina State Historic Sites. We have a great team made up of staff and volunteers that help us make it all happen. For a couple of us staff members, firing the cannon is a family affair as we have father and husbands that are part of our volunteer crew. Whether our volunteer cannoneers are relatives or not, we enjoy having the opportunity to work with them. The demonstrations always give us a chance to educate the public and have some fellowship amongst ourselves.

Our most recent Napoleon demonstration was at the CSS Neuse State Historic Site in Kinston, NC on November 15 and 16. The two day event was enjoyable except we had a few "technical difficulties" with our friction primers misfiring and our lanyard breaking on

the first day of the event. It can rattle nerves when the cannon misfires, but our crew is well trained to handle those situations.

Night demonstrations are always quite impressive and we were scheduled to have one the evening of the 15th. However, mother nature thought otherwise and we were rained out as some thunderstorms came through the area. Sun-

*"Who knew our cannon gets stage fright?"*

day's demonstrations went off beautifully without any misfires or mishaps and Amy did a great job with interpretation, as always.

As for our 32 pound Sea Coast gun, it recently got a little taste of Hollywood as the star in some footage taken for Fort Macon State Park's new orientation film. The cannon decided to behave like a diva and misfired too many times on the third firing, keeping us from being able to film any more cannon fire for

the day. Who knew our cannon gets stage fright? Some of our volunteer crew for the 32 pounder will probably be featured in the film along with our manager, Jim Steele. So look for them and our cannon in the orientation film when Fort Macon State Park opens its new visitor center.

Also look for our next artillery demonstration at Fort Fisher as part of our 144th Battle Anniversary Program on January 17, 2009. We will also be firing our Napoleon at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site on February 14-15, 2009. And if you have a group that is interested we do a Napoleon Talk. Get up close to our field piece when we bring it out to talk about its capabilities and uses and teach your group the drill. Unfortunately, we can't fire it for this special offering. Please contact Amy Thornton at our site for scheduling a Napoleon Talk.

By Jessica Sutton

Photograph of Fort Fisher's land face taken by Timothy O'Sullivan in January 1865.



## New Exhibit Opens January 2009

Opening Saturday, January 17, 2009 — the day of our anniversary program — is a new temporary exhibit at Fort Fisher State Historic Site. Designed by graduate student

and Fort Fisher employee, Shannon SanCartier, the new exhibit focuses on Civil War photography and Timothy O'Sullivan, who photographed Fort Fisher shortly after its capture in January 1865.

Replacing the *Monitors Attack!* exhibit on Civil War ironclads, which featured the handcrafted ship models created by artist Bobby Ward (gunner of our heavy

artillery cannon crew), this new exhibit will be in place until January 2011 — the start of the Civil War's sesquicentennial.

Making the exhibit possible are artifact loans from Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr., Becky Sawyer, Jim McKee, the North Carolina Museum of History, and the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee.

By Amy Manor Thornton

# Fort Fisher Attends Small Arms Training



From left to right: Amy Manor Thornton, Jessica Sutton, and Jim Steele live firing at the Historic Weapons Program small arms course.



Rolling cartridges: Jim Steele (top left), Jessica Sutton (top right), and Amy Manor Thornton (bottom).

Jessica Sutton (top) and Amy Manor Thornton (bottom) in competition for the “blind shooter award.”





# Fort Fisher Staff Around the State



Left: Jessica Sutton, Amy Manor Thornton, and Becky Sawyer assisting with Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson's Heritage Days.



Becky and Caroline Sawyer interpreting Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson's "Colonial Christmas."



CSS Neuse's November program: Amy Manor Thornton interpreting the cannon demonstration (top) and our illustrious cannon crew (from left: Ken Spence, Jim Steele, Jessica Sutton, Jesse Bricker, and Jim Steele Sr.).





## **Fort Fisher State Historic Site**

1610 Fort Fisher Blvd South  
P.O. Box 169  
Kure Beach, North Carolina 28449  
Phone: (910) 458-5538  
Fax: (910) 458-0477  
E-mail: [fisher@ncmail.net](mailto:fisher@ncmail.net)

**History happens here!**

**This newsletter was produced with support  
from the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee.**

### **Fort Fisher Restoration Committee members:**

Paul Laird, Chairman  
Gehrig Spencer, Vice-Chairman  
Tommy Tucker, Secretary/Treasurer  
Earl Lane  
Harry Payne, Jr.  
Peter T. D'Onofrio  
John Coble  
R. James MacLaren  
Jerome Fennell  
Dr. Jack Hisley

# **Spring & Summer Programs at Fort Fisher**

### **March 1, 2009: "Be A Tourist in Your Own Hometown"**

As a part of the county-wide "Be A Tourist in Your Own Hometown" day, Fort Fisher State Historic Site will open to the public on Sunday, March 1, 2009, for a special firing of the 12 pound bronze Napoleon field artillery piece.

Visitors are invited to come and learn about the history of Fort Fisher while experiencing the thrill of field artillery demonstrations. The visitor center and tour trail will also be open to the public.

### **May 30, 2009: First Napoleon Firing of the Summer**

Celebrate the beginning of the summer season with the first of several firings of the 12 pound bronze Napoleon. On Saturday, May 30, 2009, site staff and volunteers in period costume will demonstrate field artillery while teaching the public about the artillery used at Fort Fisher during the Civil War.

This program will be repeated again the summer of 2009 on Saturday, July 25, and Saturday, August 22.

### **June 3, 2009: Costumed Tours Begin for Summer '09**

The Mary Holloway Summer Intern will begin giving two costumed tours a day, Wednesday through Sundays, on June 3, 2009. Costumed summer tours are named in honor of the site's first tour guide, Mary Holloway.

In addition to costumed tour the Mary Holloway Summer Intern will also perform period weapons demonstrations in costume at scheduled times during the day. Please call the site for tour times.

### **June 27, 2009: "Garrison Life at Fort Fisher"**

Staff and volunteers in period costume engage visitors in daily life in the Confederate garrison. Learn of the hardships faced by soldiers in the fort as you watch infantry and artillery demonstrations.

Highlighting the event will be the firing of the 32 pound rifled and banded cannon at Shepherd's Battery.

Please contact the site for details about this new annual program.

**All demonstrations are subject to change, please contact the site for details on these and other programs. Funding for our programs is provided in part by the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee. Fort Fisher State Historic Site is a part of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.**